CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for processing an incoming communication from a calling party sent to a communications device 1014 of a receiving party, the method comprising the steps of:

storing a caller database including a plurality of records, each record including caller identification information corresponding to a particular caller and a respective priority selected from a plurality of priorities; and

storing a blocking time database including a plurality of records respectively corresponding to the plurality of priorities and including respective blocking time information for each priority.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

receiving an incoming communication including caller identification information;

reading call time data to determine the time that the incoming communication is received to provide a call received time.

3. The method of claim 2 further comprising the steps of:

searching the caller database to find a record having caller identification information matching the caller identification information of the incoming communication and retrieving the respective priority for that record to produce a retrieved priority;

searching the blocking time database to determine blocking time information associated with the retrieved priority to produce retrieved blocking time information.

4. The method of claim 3 further comprising the steps of:

comparing the call received time of the incoming communication with the retrieved blocking time information;

blocking the incoming communication if the call received time occurs during a blockout time indicated by the retrieved blocking time information and otherwise permitting the incoming communication to be routed to the user of the communications device.

5. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of selecting, by the user, the respective priority stored in the caller database for particular callers whose identification information is stored therein.

6. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of selecting, by the user, the respective blocking time information for the priorities stored in the blocking time database.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the identification information depends on the identity of the communication device of the calling party.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the identification information depends on the telephone number of the calling party.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the identification information depends on the IP address of the calling party.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein the identification information depends on the identity of the calling party.

11. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

storing a silence mode relative blocking time in the communications device; and

blocking incoming communications for the communications device temporarily while the silence mode relative blocking time is in effect.

12. The method of claim 1 in which the storing a caller database step further includes storing a frequency field in a record of the caller database to set a limit to the number of times an incoming communication is permitted during a selected time period from the particular calling party associated with that record.

13. The method of claim 1 in which the storing a caller database step further includes storing a duration field in a record of the caller database to set a limit to the amount of time an incoming communication is permitted. Upon this time limit being exceeded, an indication such as a beep will be invoked.

14. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:

storing an outgoing message (OGM) mapped to the caller identification information in a record of the caller database for a particular calling party;

receiving an incoming communication from the particular calling party; and

playing the outgoing message to the particular calling party when the calling party's identification information is detected by the communications device.

15. A communications system for processing incoming communications which include caller identification information, the system comprising:

a caller identification device 1003 for receiving the incoming communication and extracting caller identification information from the incoming communication;

a user communications device 1014 for receiving and providing an incoming communication to a user of the communications device;

a communications controller 1013 coupled between the caller identification device and the user communications device, the controller including:

a processor 1006 for executing code to control the transmission of incoming communications to the user communications device;

a memory 1007, 1008 for storing code for execution by the processor to control the transmission of incoming communications to the communications device, the code including a caller database including a plurality of records, each record including caller identification information corresponding to a particular caller and a respective priority selected from a plurality of priorities, the code further including a blocking time database having a plurality of records respectively corresponding to the plurality of priorities and including respective blocking time information for each priority.

16. The communications system of claim 15 wherein the code includes a caller database search routine which when executed by the processor searches the caller database in RAM memory 1007 to find a record having caller identification information matching the caller identification information of an incoming communication and retrieves the respective priority for that record to produce a retrieved priority.

17. The communications system of claim 16 wherein the code further includes a blocking time database search routine which when executed by the processor determines blocking time information associated with the retrieved priority to produce retrieved blocking time information.

18. The communications system of claim 17 wherein the code further includes a compare routine for comparing the time of the incoming communication with the retrieved blocking time information.

19. The communications system of claim 18 wherein the code further includes a blocking routine for blocking the incoming communication if the time of the incoming communication occurs at a blocking time indicated by the retrieved blocking time information and otherwise permitting the incoming communication to be routed to the user communications device.

20. The communications system of claim 15 further comprising priority selecting means for selecting, by the user, the respective priority for particular callers whose identification information is in the caller database.

21. The communications system of claim 15 further comprising blocking time selecting means for selecting, by the user, the respective blocking time information for the priorities stored in the blocking time database.

22. The communications system of claim 15 wherein the identification information depends on an IP address of the calling party.

23. The communications system of claim 15 wherein the identification information depends on the identity of the calling party.

24. The communications system of claim 15 further comprising:

storing means 1011 for storing a silence mode relative blocking time in the communications controller; and

blocking means 1009 for blocking incoming communications for the user communications device temporarily while the silence mode relative blocking time is in effect.

25. The communications system of claim 15 wherein a record of the caller database includes a frequency field which sets a limit for the number of times an incoming communication is permitted during a selected time period from the particular caller associated with that record.

26. The communications system of claim 15 wherein the caller database includes a record having an outgoing message (OGM) mapped to the caller identification information stored therein for a particular caller, the outgoing message (OGM) to be played to the particular caller when the particular caller's identification information is detected by the communications device.

27. A method for processing incoming communication sent to a communications device of a receiving party, the method comprising the steps of:

storing at least one of a plurality of originating source criteria;

storing at least one of a plurality of time criteria; and

storing at least one of a plurality of associated relative classification criteria, for classifying an incoming communication as a function of at least one of source and time.

28. The method of claim 27 further comprising the steps of:

said receiving party communications device possesses at least one of a plurality of device states where the said device state determines current associative device functions.

29. The method of claim 28 further comprising of:

said device state can be designated as mode of operation.

30. The method of claim 27 further comprising the steps of:

receiving incoming communication including originating source criteria; and

reading current time criteria to determine the time data that the incoming communication is received to provide received time information.

31. The method of claim 30 further comprising the steps of:

searching the stored originating source criteria to find a match of the incoming communication originating source criteria;

retrieving associated relative classification criteria for the said match to provide a relative classification;

searching the associated time criteria of the incoming communication associated with the said retrieved relative classification to determine the time management functions to be used for the present incoming communication;

reading the present device state; and

processing relative classification criteria and the associated time management functions to provide the functional operation to be performed by the communications device of the receiving party for the present device state.

32. The method of claim 27 in which the storing of originating source criteria further includes storing associated frequency criteria to set a limit to the number of times an incoming communication is permitted during a selected time period from the associated originating source.

33. The method of claim 27 in which the storing of originating source criteria further includes storing associated duration criteria to set a limit to the amount of time an incoming communication is permitted and providing an indication when the set limit is exceeded.

34. The method of claim 27 in which the storing of originating source criteria further includes storing an associated outgoing message (OGM).

35. The method of claim 34 and including receiving incoming communication from a particular originating source; and playing the OGM to the particular originating source when the originating source is matched.

36. The method of claim 27 in which the storing of originating source criteria further includes storing an associated announcement or pre-selected user notification such as a ring pattern.

37. The method of claim 27 further comprising of receiving incoming communication from a particular originating source; and playing the announcement or a notification to the user when the originating source is matched by the receiving party's communications device and the time criteria are satisfied.

38. The method of claim 27 in which an emergency operation is executed upon a determination of an emergency condition by the receiving party's communication device per the receiving party's pre-selected device operation.

39. The method of claim 38 further comprising of:

receiving and storing incoming communication emergency indication;

reading the emergency indication;

retrieving receiving party's communication device operation to be executed upon an emergency condition indication; and

invoking the designated device operation to be executed upon an emergency condition indication.

40. The method of claim 39 further comprising of:

receiving and decoding DTMF inputs from incoming communication source to indicate an emergency condition.

41. A method for the user rating a communication comprising of the following steps of:

establishing a communication link type;

establishing the communication source identification;

the user receiving the communication;

the user providing feedback criteria on how much they liked the communication; and

storing the user provided feedback criteria for future use.

42. The method of claim 41 wherein the communication link type is selected from the group comprising:

a voice type;

an internet content type;

a video type;

a multimedia type;

a fax type; and

a broadcast media type.

43. The method of claim 41 where the communication source identification is selected from the group comprising:

a voice communication identity;

an internet protocol identity;

a video source identifier;

a multimedia identifier;

a fax identifier; and

a broadcast media identifier.

44. The method of claim 43 where the communication source identification for a voice communication identity is selected from the group comprising:

a caller identity; or

a calling device identity.

45. The method of claim 41 where the feedback criteria is a relative priority rating.